

## **The Theory of Kindness from the Viewpoint of Japanese Human Relations**

### **— Whom Are We Kind to? —**

**Yoshiki KONDO**

#### **1. We are kind to the human beings**

We can define our Kindness (SINSETSU in Japanese) as “to make the small help by chance to others who have a trouble or a relish.” The word which corresponds to this definition may be “kindness” in English or “Freundlichkeit” in German. We, Japanese, are kind to neither animal nor thing. We are kind only to human beings. Our “gentleness (YASASISA in Japanese)” which is similar to kindness (SINSETSU) can be used for animals and things, too. But our object of kindly feeling is considerably restricted to a narrow extent. For example, when a drunken person bangs against a roadside tree, generally he says some excuse kindly to it like “ Oh! Sorry! Watch out!”, because he has mistaken a tree for someone—a person. But as soon as he notices that it is just a roadside tree, he kicks it with his foot with saying “Oh Shit! It’s just a tree in my way!” and shows by this action his regret that he had the feeling of Kindness to a thing—a plant. Differently from our Japanese “SINSETSU(kindness)”, “Kindness” in English ( “Freundlichkeit” in German) can refer to the plant in a sober state, too.

The extension of Japanese kindly feeling seems to differ from that of English and German. “Kind” in English (“freundlich” in German) can be used in a broader extent than SINSETSU. The extent of their Kindness-usage is very similar to that of a Japanese gentleness(YASASISA). So can we say that Kindness in English may mean just only YASASISA(gentleness)---not SINSETSU(Kindness in Japanese)? The word which corresponds our SINSETSU is definitely “Kindness”, because the core of sense of Kindness seems to be equal with Japanese SINSETSU(kindness). There is a project known as the name of “The modest kindness movement(CHIISANA SINSETSU UNDO)” in Japan. Similar one is developed in USA and is named “The Kindness Movement”. The interest of this association is not like that of lovers of flowers club or the humane society. Their aim (The Kindness Movement) is to be kind to human beings. The core of their Kindness is similar with our SINSETSU(kindness) --- to be kind to human beings.

In Japan we don’t term it “kind(SINSETSU)” to help the cat whose leg is tangled with wool. In Japanese, we can describe, for example, “being gentle with the cat”, but not “being kind to the cat”.

Relatively Japanese distinguish human beings from animals less than the Western peoples. (The Western peoples strictly distinguish human beings and livestock, probably from their

viewpoint of eating meat. The status of livestock is lower than that of wild animals). However, concerning Kindness, the Japanese word "SINSETSU" excludes animals from its object precisely. Because a cat or dog cannot understand the Kindness of human and will run away from him, with the eyes of "I need no help! Leave me alone!"

I had already written that "the usage of Japanese Kindness" is restricted. Japanese can be kind only to human beings. But it is not an enough explanation of its restriction. Its usage is further more limited. We are not kind to a corpse of a person, although he or she had lived as a person and may still be defined as a "human". We can say, "I helped kindly the sick man on the next bed of mine to sit on the wheelchair". But we cannot say, after his death, putting him in the coffin, "I put him kindly in the coffin". Furthermore, probably we cannot be kind to a newborn baby or a vegetable, though they are not dead.

Concerning the sympathy(DOU-JOU in Japanese), Japanese sympathize neither with a dead person, perhaps, nor with vegetable. We sympathize with his family who are still alive, but not with the vegetable himself. When I went to the hospital to see my friend who had become the vegetable, and after that I noticed my feeling, saying "I sympathized...." With whom do I sympathize? Not with my friend, the vegetable. I felt pity and lament for my friend with regrettable tear, but I realized that I don't sympathize with him. The one whom I sympathize with may be the family of my friend. We also don't sympathize with the innocent infant who is at the assembly of the relatives for the funeral of his father and happy with the situation because there are many relatives. He cannot understand the situation and cannot empathize with other peoples at the funeral. This infant draws our pitiful tears, but we don't sympathize(DOU-JOU) with him. If we "sym-pathize(DOU-JOU)" with him, we may share his happy feeling at that funeral hall with him, because DOU-JOU means to imagine the Same(Dou) Passion(JOU) . But English (German) speakers feel "compassion or sympathy" not only with a corpse and infants but also cats and dogs. This difference between Japanese Sympathy and English (German) parallels that of the Kindness.

We don't direct sympathy or kindly feeling toward these creatures (a dog, a cat, a corpse and so on). Because in sympathy we hold "sym(DOU)" and "pathos(JOU)", so the object of sympathy must hold "sym(DOU=same)" "pathos(JOU=passion)" with us perhaps. But there is no "pathos(JOU)" in the corpse. Neither is in the vegetable. I guess that the similar concept is in the feeling of Kindness. In other words we presuppose that the person who receives our Kindness "can understand" our Kindness as Kindness like we do. We are kind to neither plants nor dogs nor cats, because we recognize that they cannot supposedly understand our "kindness(SINSETSU)" by themselves. We look at the object carefully. According to the status of the objects in our society, we change delicately our attitude or feeling toward them. To a

flower, we are not “kind(SINSETSU)”, only are “kind(YASASII=gentle)”.

**(We are kind only to the man who can understand our Kindness)** That is to say that the object of our Japanese kindness(SINSETSU) is restricted considerably ; it must be the person who understand our kindly performance as Kindness. We are kind to the person who has the same cognitive ability like us to understand the Kindness. To an infant or a vegetable who does not have the human consciousness, we are scarcely kind. Because, I think, they seem to be lacking that sort of our capacity.

When someone says, “Let’s be kind(SINSETSU) to the flower !” or “Be kind(SINSETSU) to the frog!” (these applications of “kind” are normal in English), Japanese feel that in these expressions the flower or the frog is treated as to have the cognitive ability of a human. These expressions personify the flower and the frog which receive the Kindness, and treat them as if they say, “Thank you, Miss!” So we feel as if we find ourselves in the world of infantile primitive animism.

However in reality, a frog jumps out with peeing, or a cat runs away, scratching our arm, from us in spite of our Kindness. And we awake from our dream and return to the reality. Then we calm down ourselves and say “You beast! You cannot understand our Kindness”, and after that we are never kind to them.

**(Unnecessary caring or meddling)** Kindness is a modest help, and is subtle. It must be definitely interpreted by the receiver of the Kindness as a Kindness. Kindness is not a merely imagined feeling, but must be an action, and recognized and accepted by the receiver as a Kindness. If my Kindness is not received as Kindness by the receiver, my favorable action becomes useless. This Kindness is not the SINSETSU(kindness). When we want to be kind(SINSETSU) to someone, we have to observe the person carefully and sense what he or she really needs or how we should be kind to him or her.

Furthermore, Kindness is sometimes considered as an “unnecessary caring” or a “meddling”. The Kindness which is interpreted as an unnecessary caring, is not Kindness. Self-righteous Kindness is quite troublesome. After being understood and received as Kindness by the receiver, our action becomes Kindness. It is the same process as love. If you “love” purely intently someone, but he or she rejects your love and he or she feels uncomfortable by your action, then this love may become a “sexual harassment” or a “violence”. Only when the receiver accepts your feeling of love, it can be regarded as a love. In the case of love, one-sided love also can be considered as the condition of heart “love” by the people objectively. But only kindly heart is incomplete to be kind (SINSETSU) to someone. SINSETSU ultimately must be an action. Insofar as the “heart” or concept, image of Kindness is in our mind like as one-sided love, and doesn’t harm the person, it is just a concept or idea, our feeling in us. However, Kindness

(SINSETSU) must be an action, and the action of Kindness influences the receiver, and when the Kindness is unpleasant and hard to accept for him, it is clearly an injurious troublesome action. Every repulsive Kindness is not Kindness but an “unnecessary caring” or a “meddling”.

**(Our Kindness is correlative)** When the receiver regards it as a meddling, our Kindness is not Kindness but a meddling. Our self-righteous Kindness can absolutely not be a Kindness. Kindness needs to be received as Kindness by the receiver. Kindness depends on reaction of each receiver. With the one who understands our modest kindly behavior and mind, and may thank us for our Kindness, we can communicate, through Kindness as a communication tool. Whoever receives the Kindness, must be able to understand that the kindly person tries to help to him with favor. In this regard it is an impossible request for babies, of course dogs and cats. It's necessary to become the age of boy so that he can understand the favor of man and does not cry even if he sees a rugged man being kind to him. Kindness can work as a way of a communication only between the persons who understand Kindness. Being merely kind or gentle(YASASII) is not being kind(SINSETSU). Only after the receiver's acceptance as Kindness, it becomes Kindness. Looking at the receiver closely, and sensing what he really needs. That is the key to be able to be kind. Whether we become kind, gentle, or polite, is up to it; how the receiver accepts our action.

According to each person, we change our attitude delicately. This change may have something to do with Language Manner. The Indo-European Languages simply have only one first person singular form like as “I” in English, but Japanese has many first person singular form according to each partner ; like as “WATAKUSI(I in politeness)” “ORE(I in familiarity)” and “Father(I in Family)” etc. “WATAKUSI” or “BOKU” is I in front of strangers or others. In front of my friend I call myself as “ORE” or “WASHI” etc. The father and the mother in front of their children call themselves as “Father” and “Mother”. The figure of “ I ” is determined by the persons who we communicate with. Our concept of “ I ” in the communication is much correlative.

According to the communication partner, the figure “ I ” has to be changed. Or our eternal figure in the communication is subtle, and always according to each person, we formulate the figure “ I ” correlatively. Also in Kindness, if I, the performer of kindly action, am called “the meddler” by the receiver, then I should think myself “I may be a meddler perhaps” in dismay and accept it.

We look at each person carefully. We observe how our correlates watch us and adapt ourselves to the image that is made by them. Human being is originally social animal and his “self” should be defined correlatively in our society. In Japanese society, this correlative way of “self”-definition and the reliance on one another play more important role than the Western

society. On the one hand, one can see that we are full of warm, but on the other hand, that we are lacking in a voluntary or independent spirit.

In the West the movement of the individualism in the society is strong and the individualizing is seen as “the way for each persons to be independent in a society”. The negative aspect of that is that people tend to pay less attentions to each others. As far as the individualizing in a society, Japan is intrinsically and traditionally not interested in that. Our culture is completely different from the Western culture and, in Japanese society, the concept of individualizing cannot play and have played any important role. Wherever or whomever they face, Western people can maintain their unchangeable figure of “I”. They also do not change this attitude, when they are kind to others. So it is not important for Kindness-performers who the receiver is –for example a dog or cat--or how the receiver is---for example alive or not. “I”, the consistent invariable and kindly person, carry out the Kindness. This fact is much more meaningful for their concept of “Kindness”.

## **2. We are kind to others**

In Japan we are kind only to “a man” not a cat or a dog. Furthermore, in regard to our restriction of the Kindness-usage, “the man” must be a merely “stranger/ others”. I don’t perform the kindness(SINSETSU) on my family. Concerning the Western concept of “Kindness”, they are kind to a dog and a cat as well as their family. The Germans also can say their Kindness (Freundlichkeit) toward their own family. Since the individualism penetrates through their society completely, the difference between inside and outside of family seems to be relatively not a matter for them. So, is the Japanese Kindness-usage not normal? The explanation for this custom is that in Japan the partition between inside and outside of the family is big. So one can be very kind(SINSETSU) to others outside of his family, but not to his own family and also cannot sympathize(DOUJOU) with them. The parents who “are kind to their own children” don’t exist in Japan. When we hear, “He had been kind to the child”, we know that this child was not his child but other’s. The same goes for the sympathy(DOUJOU). The parents who sympathize with their own children also do not exist.

Why Japanese don’t use the words “Kindness” or “Sympathy” for their own family? Concerning the help or the regard, of course, we carry out such Kindness-like actions toward our own family. The point is that we have a special deep feeling to our own family. Every time when there is a trouble in the family, we do not perform a small help, but devote ourselves to solve it. We need have a deeper feeling than performing the Kindness (It is equal situation with the Sympathy toward the suffering. We can sympathize as an onlooker with others but not with our own family. We share the pain or suffering within family-members directly, because there is

no distance between them). It may be equal to European. The Japanese distinguish especially strictly the family from others and don't refer the external Kindness to the internal family. In the family, we cannot satisfy with using the normal concept of the Kindness and the Sympathy. Namely, within own family, we need to use a special kind of that concept---“the ultra-Kindness and ultra-Sympathy”.

Kindness is merely a small help in an unexpected encounter with leeway. Kindness is essentially “the modest Kindness”. In Japanese family, like other cultures, parents devote themselves to their children and their voluntary assistance is very natural and very beautiful---they are ultra kind to their family every day, even when they have no leeway to be so. This tendency is strong in Japan. A mother devotes herself to her family completely. She is every day ultra kind to her family---Some scholars name it “shadow work” (the toil which is unpaid and not rewarded). This cannot be easily described as a “Kindness”, the small help with leeway. A father donates all his salary to his family --not a friendly pocket money-- and run through his lifetime just only doing that. That is also the ultra Kindness—I want to call it “shadow donation” (the empty contribution). These great donation and work cannot be described with the word of small Kindness.

In comparison with the scarlet deep love, the ultra-Kindness to own family, the faintly warm Kindness of small thin pink loses a color or disappears.

“Kindness” keeps the distance to others and only offers a very small superficial assistance. In the action of Kindness we must not step over the boundary of others. We should restrain ourselves so as to offer just the thin-pink favor, Kindness. It is absurd or a nuisance to offer the deep scarlet love. For example, when some young lady asks a man “to carry her heavy baggage”—for Kindness—for a small help, but he wants to be ultra-kind to her with the scarlet deep love and says, “No problem. I am glad to help you. Anyway, are you alone here? You must feel lonely. So we shall be tonight together...” She is neither his wife nor girlfriend. His affection for her is too much. His Kindness is spoiled by this intensive affection completely.

Kindness is essentially a “modest Kindness”. Kindness exists probably also in the family, but in front of the big ultra-Kindness, it comes to disappear. In the family, the core of love is not thin pink but deep scarlet ultra Kindness. When we set a fanciful distance between family-members and us, exceptionally we can use sometimes “Kindness and Sympathy” against our own family. In such a situation, the scarlet dyed love becomes into the thin pink feeling—the “Kindness”—because the virtual distance works as white paints and dilutes the strong color—the scarlet into the thin pink.

For instance, a father who has trouble with his personal computer, says to his son who teaches him how to use the PC; “I cannot understand what you are talking about. Can not you be more

kind to me?” In such a situation, on the one hand, they sense a kind of distance actually between them, but on the other hand, they cannot help but recognize each other as a family, unconsciously. In other words, they cannot pay attentions or respects like they usually do to others. The problem is that there is a distance between them and intrinsically a certain respect or attention should be paid. So the father is not happy, because he feels that he should be taught with the heart of generosity, so-called, with SINSETSU by his son---the virtual stranger.

Also concerning Sympathy, a daughter can say to her mother “I sympathize with you that you could not be allowed to go to school, when you are a child. Your generation.... ” and so on. Here also this daughter ranks her mother who exists in another world and irrelevant time and sees her mother objectively—as an observer. Normally in Japan we don’t sympathize with our own family, for we cannot behave ourselves as observers of own family and are likely to share the pain with the sufferer in family and agonize about this suffering together. Since the daughter in the above example becomes an observer exceptionally, she can say to her mother “I sympathize with you”.

**(To others/ strangers)** The typical Kindness may occur among others who meet unexpectedly each other. For example, even if the expenditure of time to carry Kindness out is almost as long as the one to fulfill a voluntary work which is similar to Kindness, there is a specific distinction between them. The voluntary work is a planned, precisely organized assistance and a full-dress work. The volunteers devote themselves to the work. They can and have to go wherever and whenever their assistance is needed. But Kindness is just a small improvisational assistance. It is a non-essential performance against accident or trouble, by the one who are there by chance. That is to say, strangers are kind to other strangers.

The very situation in which “Kindness” takes place is following; a man wants to do something and so he tries to prepare for that closely and perfectly. (When we want to do something, we should prepare for it, perfectly as we can, by ourselves in general---it is a duty and general courtesy.) In spite of his careful arrangement, he faces some difficulties. Then, he needs help. When the problem is too complicated, normally he had better ask a specialist to solve the problem. When the problem is too trifling to worry about, one good way to deal the problem is just to leave it. However, if he can find someone at the very time, he can ask him for a small help. The “someone” helps him---that is the “Kindness”. We can ask a stranger for a kindly assistance--a small assistance.

But, one should not ask the “someone” for a small help—the Kindness—who is far away from him. Please once imagine that you are in an island. You want to camp there, so you need to set a tent up. Mostly it is little bit difficult to set it up only by yourself. At the very time, you find a huge tanker on the horizon. You shout toward the tanker; “Help me!” Then the tanker

changes the direction toward the island to help you. The sailors land on the island and you ask them for their Kindness; “Could you kindly help me to set up my tent?”

It is absolutely not a proper situation for anyone to perform the “Kindness”. Concerning the Kindness, “to assist merely others” is not an enough perfect requirement. The one whom we kind to must be restricted to the very stranger whom we encounter in the same place.

The Kindness, which we direct toward others, is a pure Kindness. The Kindness, which is made to the friend, can hardly be such a pure Kindness, because the excessive calculations are often involved in that kind of Kindness --- for example, to avoid being disliked by him, or to be assisted some day by him. A pure Kindness without such an impure concern can be made more easily to others in general.

### **3. We are kind to the person who has a trouble or a relish**

The kindness(SINSETSU) is a voluntary modest assistance to help someone except for family-members. Well, is this also Kindness, that a man goes around his neighborhood and throws some monies into the letter box of neighbors, or offers persistently a sightseeing guidance to a traveler whom he happened to meet on the street? His intention is that he wants to do something good for someone and he can feel “I had done a good thing for him. It please me....”, but it must be a nuisance or “unnecessary caring” to the receiver of this self-righteous Kindness. In some instances this kind of action becomes a harassment or a crime. The one, whom we are kind to, must be in trouble. When we will be kind to others, it’s necessary to check whether they are really in trouble and request our Kindness.

When we meet only the person who has no problem or no want, there is, regrettably, neither need nor chance for Kindness. First of all, the Kindness starts with noticing that there is a person who is in trouble or in want. At a station, it is natural to be kind to a person who has a difficulty to find his way. But we should not perform this Kindness toward commuters who know their way very well and absolutely are not in trouble. There is no chance for Kindness to play a role.

“Trouble(KON)” in Chinese character shows that a tree is surrounded with a frame and is in a tight condition. Although a man (who is symbolized with a tree) wishes or wants something, he encounters difficulty (the frame) to get it, so he is confounded and is suffering from it. Kindness is the very help for this man.

Through Kindness, we can communicate with not only a person who is in troubled, but also who has a relish for our donation of Kindness. When someone has a relish, desire or want, we kindly respond to these. For example, when you make a cup of coffee for yourself, then you see a man who seems to also want to have coffee and you guess that he wants coffee. So, in addition



to your coffee, you make one more cup of coffee for him. This may be Kindness.

However, it is not Kindness but an “unnecessary caring” or a “harassment”, to make coffee for the person who does not want or like it. Same act can be interpreted as a Kindness as well as an unnecessary caring or a harassment. The interpretation is up to the receiver of the act.

**(To perform a "small Kindness" is kind)** When someone is in trouble or wants something, but the trouble or want is too complicated or too much for us, then we don't perform Kindness. Strictly speaking, the one who perform “Kindness” must recognize that the (Kindness-receiver's) problem is enough easy for him (Kindness-actor) to solve. Whether the problem is heavy for the receiver or not, does not play a great role for performing Kindness. In general, Kindness should be a “small help” in a modest way.

It is normally a stranger whom we are kind to. If a stranger who has a problem with money asked us for 500,000 yen at the station, nobody can be kind to him. We may understand this request as a joke, mishearing or kind of extortion. The trouble or want which can be treated with Kindness must be small enough for the Kindness- performer.

For our own family we devote ourselves with ultra-Kindness to solve problems—even if it is extremely difficult. When a grandson calls his grandmother with a tearful voice; “Grandma! Help me! I got a problem with money! Can you please remit the amount of 500,000 yen into my account as soon as possible?”; then it is natural for every Grandmas to run to the bank immediately and pay into his account. How rich Japanese pensioners are! Well, It was a crime which I had read in newspapers recently. Sad to say, the “me” was not her grandson but a stranger, wrongdoer. It is a good case to see how devotedly and blindly a family-member sacrifices oneself to solve the problem of another family-member. Unfortunately, in this case, the wrongdoer benefited from this warm Grandma's self-sacrifice. Compared with our this attitude toward family, we are rather cold to others. The assistance against others, is restricted within merely a small deed without any stress. This is our kindness (SINSETSU in Japanese).

In Japan, we often use the expression, “CHIISANA SINSETSU (modest kindness)”. Here, I want to explain “the modest Kindness” with some examples. Firstly “(modest) Kindness” must be a small help and should not be stresses neither for the Kindness-actor nor -receiver. So, we Japanese use this phrase “ It was just a trifle thing. Don't worry.” frequently, when we do Kindness for others—even if the action is not trifle. With this phrase we show that the Kindness-receiver has no responsibility at all to pay back the same quality and quantity of Kindness to us. That is our humility. In addition, the Kindness-actor indicates by this phrase that Kindness is relatively easy for anyone and recommends the modest Kindness-movement to the Kindness-receiver and promotes this movement in our society.

Secondly, a certain manner should be followed by both Kindness-actors and -receivers. They

must respect the distance between them to keep their contact as just a modest relationship—they have to be conscious that they have no personal relationship. When someone asks you the way to the station, you have only to tell her “the way to the station”. That is the Kindness. It is verbose and indecent to behave yourself like “Yeah! I know the way! Follow me! I can go with you. Oh! I have enough time today. So how about having a dinner with me tonight?” That is absolutely too much for a person who just wants to know the way to the station. This act is against the Kindness-manner. So it cannot be Kindness.

A typical and effective Kindness is in such a case like the receiver of Kindness is subjectively in a big trouble and the assistance of a kindly person succeeds in helping him with just a small work. It is a “small Kindness” for the performer and a “big Kindness” for the receiver. Both the Kindness-actor and -receiver are mostly conscious of this effective situation and favorable relationship. When someone is inexperienced and cannot understand a resolution at all, he is puzzled and in panic, then the kindly person comes and assists easily with saying, “This is just a piece of cake!” Good examples for that are that a postman shows the way for a stranger or a student of informatics inducts a PC-beginner into the use of Personal Computer.

We are kind to others who are in trouble or have a relish. But it is often difficult to perceive by appearance whether the one is in trouble or not, for problems are more subjective things. When a person expresses “I am in trouble”, then the problem can be clearly recognized as a problem by people around him. Therefore, we ask someone the way, we ask someone for help to solve the PC-problem. These are our very expressions “ I am in trouble”. To react to such a request can be regarded as 100 percent Kindness and that kind of Kindness is really welcomed by the Kindness-receivers. However it is generally not so easy to say straightforwardly “I’m in trouble!” Such people tend to keep the problems in their own mind and try to solve them by themselves—sometimes because of shyness, sometimes because of the anxiety to depreciate his evaluation in society. In this case one should start Kindness with finding the want itself.

It is difficult to perceive by appearance, whether a person is in trouble and has a relish. Many people feign often that they are not in trouble or do not have any want. Just finding out these troubles or wants can often help them and can be interpreted as “Kindness” by them. However, it is really difficult to find out the hidden problems. For instance, when we see a person who is evidently poor, we recognize his situation as “problem”. Because, in our society, poverty is obviously recognized as “Problem”. So, many of kind persons will perceive that they should make a small help for him. But it is also the reality in our society that there are some poor people who do not think themselves poor at all or poverty as their pride. To rescue these people from poverty is therefore surely regarded as an unnecessary caring.

Sometimes, just to fulfill someone’s want cannot be a Kindness or, at worst, becomes an

unnecessary caring. To give a cigarette to a person who seems to want it eagerly, is not a Kindness but an unnecessary caring, when he managed to break his habit of smoking.

We cannot look at the inside of other person's mind and only imagine it, so we occasionally carry out unnecessary Kindness to a person who is not in trouble in fact. This Kindness becomes an unnecessary meddling for him. The excess of Kindness creates rather the trouble to a person who isn't actually in trouble and makes nuisance to him. In this case, to restrain Kindness is Kindness. The different sense of value often triggers some misunderstanding.

And occasionally the excess of Kindness causes the overgrowth of parasites who rely upon the Kindness. Climbing the mountain climbing without any provisions, they call easily helicopter when they are in trouble. They do not bring their own umbrella, in spite of the relatively precise weather forecast, and lend the other's umbrella, when it rains. It is true that Kindness makes them parasites. Against this problem of parasites in our society, we must stop Kindness toward them. That is for the real and forward Kindness for them.

#### **4. We are not kind to an unpleasant person (even when he is in trouble)**

We are kind to others who are in trouble or have some relish to be helped. This Kindness works perfectly for its receiver. But the Kindness-performer is also a human who has own will and intention. So it is up to his discretion, whether he carries out the Kindness or not. Kindness is not a duty. It is an optional spontaneous donation with benevolence or favor. So we are never kind to the sufferer whom we hate. We hesitate to be kind, when we can guess a disgusting reaction of the Kindness-receiver to our Kindness. Also, we try intentionally not to be kind to a person who is absolutely independent and feels the communication through Kindness uncomfortable. We are naturally also not kind to a man who is selfish or egoistic and does not thank for our Kindness. According to one's etiquette, we can freely decide whether we perform Kindness or not, for Kindness is small yet a burden.

Because the disgusting, uncomfortable person is a person whom we want to keep away from us to avoid facing. We try to make a big distance intentionally, so that it is difficult to actuate our Kindness. However, in view of the morality, we help also such a person, sometimes, when he begs us to help him or the problem seems too serious to ignore. In this case but the sensible warm consideration which is particular to kindly actions cannot be seen.

We normally want to punish the person whom we hate or to erase, negate his existence. So, it is ridiculous to make the donation of Kindness to him. We want to task heavy punishment to him; like the grotesque punishment against the greedy old lady of our fairy-tale "SITAKIRI-SUZUME(the sparrow to have been cut its tongue)"; and to reject to donate him any good things. Although Kindness is a small help and small donation, this deed is evidently

advantage for the receiver. Therefore, even if a person is in trouble and wants anything, we usually hesitate to perform our Kindness against the person whom we hate.

When our minds are full of “hostility” or “malevolence” against a person, we will and can not carry out the Kindness to him. Kindness is a small but voluntary donation of valuable things. That is to say that Kindness for the enemy is to profit this enemy. Since the hostility is a strong intention and inclination to antagonize and harm the enemy, so it is very contradictory to profit him with one’s own Kindness. The malevolence means also one’s underhanded, cold malice to be delighted with one’s unhappiness and to try not to do anything good for the person. We hold in general the hostility and malevolence against our enemy. So, it is really ridiculous and very rare to solve his trouble with Kindness.

**(We are kind to the person whom we hold in regard)** The person whom we are kind to is others who have some want and against whom we have no hostility or malevolence. In addition, we are kind actively to the person whom we hold in regard. Normally, one’s positive impression (outlooks, behavior etc.) is the trigger to carry out Kindness toward him, because we can easily hold such a person in regard and he makes us to wish his happiness.

To be asked for Kindness is often by chance and by unknown others (ex: being asked the way at the station suddenly.) Being asked by somebody “Where is a police box?”, we reply in an instant, “Go straight and you can find it in the left”. This action (Kindness) is usually fulfilled in a so short time that we do the Kindness without pondering whether we really like the person or hate him. However, the “positive” impression of the Kindness-receiver is a very important factor for us to perform Kindness. Please imagine your prototype of nasty person. Can you actively kind to him? I suppose most of you feel some unconscious hesitation to perform Kindness toward him. The good example of the prototypical nasty person for our generation in Japan is a young person with dyed brown hair. And they know that they cannot give us a good impression because of their outlook. So, they try to make a better impression by their behavior, when they need our help. When they ask us the way to the police box, they ask very politely like “Could you kindly tell me the way to the police box?” —not “ Hey you! Tell me the way to the police box!”

It is not a necessary factor for the Kindness to hold our favor, but we can say that we are hardly kind to a person whom we hold malevolence or hostility and who disgust us. Concerning our kindness we are free to do or not to do. If we don’t like to do, we need not be kind to. Kindness is never a duty and we cannot be forced to do that. To force someone to be kind is extortion or threat. Against the request like “Give me 100 yen” at a station, if we respond voluntarily with favor, it is a Kindness. But if we are forced to respond to the request, it is often an extortion and crime.

Anyway, we are mostly kind to an acceptable person, actively. Such a person stimulates our unconscious desire to shorten the distance between us: the feeling is never an excessive one. This desire is often the trigger for the Kindness.

**(The target of the “benevolence” and the “mercifulness”)** “Benevolence” (ZEN-I in Japanese/ ZEN= good, I= will) means the intention to do something good to someone—the antonym of malevolence (AKU-I/ AKU= bad, I= will). More precisely, when we have this intention, we try to understand a person affirmatively and to be so altruistic that we can do something good for him.

The targets of our Benevolence are often the weak in our society who are, for example, handicapped. This is a different aspect from Kindness with Favor. It is but the very same that both words can be used as the action or feeling toward others. The action that we do for our own family with good will is never “benevolent” nor “favorable kind”. My family is myself, i.e. my family trouble is my trouble and my family happiness is also my own happiness. Concerning the thing to do with ourselves and our own family, we can scarcely be an observer to see it objectively. As regards Japanese benevolence(ZEN-I) and favor(KOU-I) (and also malevolence), it is necessary for us to stand on a viewpoint of an observer.

The favor is much subjective feeling than the benevolence. Favor is to like a person and pay regard for him. So it is natural to feel, more or less, toward a favorable person that we want to approach him. The benevolence is, in this point, completely different. The benevolence is the intention only to think about the advantage of others—there is only the feeling that we SHOULD do something good for him.

Kindness with favor is “WANT (Wollen)”. Kindness with benevolence is, in comparison with the above, “SHOULD (Sollen)”. Benevolence is a very effective trigger for Kindness-action. We feel that we should do good for a person even if we are less ready for being kind. So, with the Kindness of benevolence, we can simply help the weak or sufferer—even without favor.

“ITSUKUSIMI(kind of affection and mercifulness)” or “JIHISIN(mercifulness)” can be categorized into the same kind of feeling as “favor” and “benevolence”. The particularity of the “ITSUKUSIMI” and “JIHISIN” is the affection (or love) of philanthropy.

The favor and mercifulness have the aspect of “a love to give someone”. However, the character of the both is very different. Concerning the character of favor, there is danger that it causes us the strong inclination to get the love of the target-person and occupy him, even if we need to deprive his love of someone. The affection of mercifulness is different from it. With this affection, we can simply concentrated on showing and giving our “(kind of) love” to a person, perfectly; the love to give someone.

Regarding ITSUKUSIMI we need not restrict the target strictly like “Kindness”. We can hold

this concept toward our strangers, own family, plants, animals and also just a thing like a stone in our hand. We can be merciful for anything and try to treat them with tenderness. In addition, it is no matter for us whether the target thanks us or not. Mercifulness is the generous contributive attitude.

When we hold this merciful affection toward someone, we may passively abstract ourselves like the “I” in Western concept of Kindness from that of Japanese. Or on the contrary, the “I (EGO)” disappears perfectly—as if we are in the state of “MU (0, empty, realized state of ZEN-Buddhism)—and we wish other person’s happiness.

When this feeling is the cause of Kindness, we can be kind even to the one against whom we hold the hostility, because the heart of “ITSUKUSIMI” is much bigger than negative inclinations like hostility or malevolence.

## **5. Kindness toward selected targets**

**(Kindness with secret intention)** It is not difficult to communicate with a stranger through Kindness. And, in fact, “Kindness” is a good chance to be acquainted with unfamiliar persons. So, regrettably, Kindness is often used just as the means to this end, without benevolence, mercifulness and courtesy—the Kindness with secret intention. Differently from the Kindness with benevolence etc., the social weak are not the target of this kind of Kindness at all. The purpose of the Kindness with secret intention is not to act “Kindness”. It is just a means to one’s own end, his secret intention. Through the kind action one can approach an unfamiliar target without being suspected and get a big game by a light work.

And the one can justify his “this” behavior, though his secret intention, that he had performed the kind action, only because he was unexpectedly next to the Kindness-receiver and asked for Help by him.

Originally, Kindness is performed by a stranger, for example, a person who you meet on the street, incidentally. We usually accept such a Kindness without skepticism. Kindness is a little and light contact between the Kindness-actor and -receiver. So, it is not necessary for the Kindness-receiver to feel that he owe the actor a thing. And Kindness is not often rejected, because receivers normally interpret his action as “Benevolence” or “Favor”. The one with secret intention utilize these aspects of Kindness to realize his aim.

The secret intention is often criminal. The people with such an intention feign that they are really kind to fulfill their want or plan. In extreme case, the intention is to kill someone or to commit robbery. So, for them Kindness is absolutely an instrument to approach their target-person. We had better be careful of the Wolf in “Little Red Riding-hood”.

The another form of Kindness-misuse is “Fake-Kindness (SINSETSU-GOKASI)”. In this case,

one behaves himself very kindly and at the same time tries to benefit himself. Kindness is not the way to approach someone, but such a person makes just much more on the fulfillment of his plan or want. The good example for that is the monkey in Japanese fairy-tale “SARU KANI GASSEN(the battle of crabs and a greedy monkey)” who gave a green, not ripe Kaki kindly to the crab.

The difference between “the Kindness with secret intention” and “the Fake-Kindness” is following; the secret intention of that Kindness is hidden behind the kind behavior and attitude and hardly can be seen by appearance. This kind of intentions can be, as I already written in above, often criminal. In Fake-Kindness, one does not intentionally try to conceal that his advantage is a priority matter. In former Kindness, the performer tends to be excessive kind and devoted to hide his intention (ex: The Wolf in “Little Red Riding-hood”). In the latter case, the performer seems that he regardless persists in his advantage, when his Kindness is smaller than his greed (ex: The Monkey who throws a green Kaki at the crab).

( **The target of the instrumental Kindness**) Kindness is directed towards others who are in trouble or have a relish. This condition can be applied also to the Kindness with secret intention and the Fake-Kindness. However the latter Kindnesses’-actors select their target, according to their aim. The Wolf in “Little Red Riding-hood” will be kind neither to a woodman in trouble nor to a crying lost-boy. He aims only at the “Little Red Riding-hood”, who can satisfy his lust. He chooses the very Kindness-receiver who can be suitable to gain his end.

The Fake-Kindness has the same character, as regards the choice of the target. The Monkey will be kind only to the crab, the owner of the Kaki-tree—never to unproductive meaningless crabs in trouble. The target of these Kindnesses must be limited to the one who benefits the Kindness-actor. In the Kindness-Action, this sort of Kindness-actors are haunted to get as much profit as he can.

The both Kindnesses aim not to help someone but to satisfy his own greed. In some cases of these Kindnesses, the receiver’s want or relish can be actually fulfilled and they are happy with that. But that means (almost) nothing for this kind of Kindness-actors. The aim is the fulfillment of their own desires. In other words, they are not kind to others, but to themselves.

(**The communication with neighbors through Kindness**) Kindness is performed to others next to you. The others who are always next to you are—your neighborhood. We usually try to be kind to each other, because of a certain purpose—kind of secret intention. We show through our kind behaviors that we have no hostility nor malice against them and want to keep a good relationship between us. The Kindness can create a friendly relationship under a consciousness of the positive distance between us. This purpose can be also defined as the secret intention, probably. We want to be in a good relationship with neighborhood, just because they live

accidentally next to us. For this purpose we use the Kindness actually instrumental.

However, concerning this intention, one cannot say this Kindness is adulterate. It is natural for us human beings to try to communicate with other persons around us in a peaceful and friendly way. Through Kindness, indeed, one can easily realize this intention. In addition, the communication through Kindness keeps an adequate distance as “others” between communicators (Kindness-actors and -receivers). The Kindness is a small donation, a small help under the consciousness of a certain distance. So, we understand each other that we should not step over the border as “others” and should keep the comfortable distance so that we can behave ourselves with respect for each other.

With neighborhood of our own family, our sanctuary, we want to have a friendly and comfortable relationship. However it is troublesome for us when one ignores the distance between us and steps over the border. The communication through Kindness maintains this distance. The Kindness is the means to show our neighborhood that we have no intention to hurt them and try to maintain the good and long relationship with proper distance as neighbors. About this instrumental Kindness, we need not to be nervous. Indeed, we use Kindness to realize a certain purpose, but the character of this intention is completely different from that of the Wolf in “Little Red Riding-hood”. This Kindness is actually instrumental, but this instrumental Kindness is, in this case, “instrumentalized” in a good way.

We are likely to react upon one’s Kindness with Kindness. We show our proper gratitude and politeness to the kind person. A Kindness-receiver often rejects one’s Kindness with thanks, in consideration of Kindness-actor’s loads. Such a kind attitude of Kindness-receiver inspires the actor to greater inclination to be more kind to him, the receiver. Here the favorable circulation of Kindness grows. Even if one performs Kindness without goodwill, we cannot see his inner mind directly by his appearance. So we can only guess his inner mind by his kindly appearance and behavior. Therefore we incline to be kind to him in return for his Kindness. Here, too, the circulation of Kindness can often arise and grow—the Kindness-circulation with others and neighbors in a comfortable, favorable distance.

Resume:

## **The Theory of Kindness from the Viewpoint of Japanese Human Relations**

— Whom Are We Kind to? —

**Yoshiki KONDO**

We can define our kindness (SINSETSU in Japanese) as making a small help by chance to



others who have a trouble or a relish. The word which corresponds to this definition may be “kindness” in English or “Freundlichkeit” in German. The Kindness (Freundlichkeit) in English(German) refers not only human beings but also animals or plants, the target of our kindness (SINSETSU) is restricted only to human beings.

Moreover we Japanese cannot be kind to an infant, a vegetable and a dead. Our Kindness refers probably only the person who can understand our kindly behavior as Kindness.

Furthermore our object of kindness (SINSETSU) must be restricted to others. We are kind only to others. In English (also in German) the Kindness (Freundlichkeit) can be used in each family, too. But usually we don’t apply the Kindness to our own family. Because, I think, our Japanese families are dissatisfied with the expression like “Kindness” which sounds too distant for us to refer to own family.

The one whom we are kind to must be concretely in trouble or have relish. If a person who received our Kindness feels displeasure with it, this Kindness is not Kindness but may be an unnecessary caring or meddling. Kindness must be interpreted as Kindness by the receiver freely.

The performer of Kindness also must be free. We are free to be kindly or not. We can select the target (person and matter) of our kindly performance at will. In this respect we are apt to exclude the unpleasant detestable person from our Kindness. We tend to be kind to charming person with our favor. Or from benevolence in our mind we tend to be kind to a weak or an unfortunate.

The Kindness at our disposal is utilized sometimes for approach to someone ---not the assistance of others. Kindness is usually directed to others and the approach of someone to others with secret intention is not suspected by these others. Best and innocent example of this application of Kindness is one with the neighbors as others. This Kindness keeps the distance and good favorable relations with the neighbors. The neighbors also response to this favor with same favor and vice versa. In the Kindness a good circulation of Kindness arises often.

西日本応用倫理学研究会 『ぷらくしす』 2004年冬号 pp.1-15